



Illinois American Water  
1000 Internationale Parkway  
Woodridge, IL 60517



© 2007 Illinois American Water

## Sanitary Sewer Service Guide

Information you need to know  
about sanitary sewer service and  
how to prevent sewer backups



## Dear Customer:

Illinois American Water is pleased to be your sewer service provider. As a homeowner, you may not realize that you are responsible for maintaining the sewer line running between your home's exterior and the property line. This sewer line is highly vulnerable to clogs and blockages – from tree roots, pipe collapse, and common waste, which can happen at any time, usually without advance notice. In most cases those lines were put in place when your home was originally built and may have gone through years, or even decades, of seasonal changes, root invasions, or cumulative blockages.

We are providing this Sanitary Sewer Service Guide to help you better understand your sanitary sewer service, how to prevent sewer backups, and what to do in a sewer backup emergency.

At Illinois American Water, our priority is providing reliable customer service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We have established a team of customer service professionals at our call center who are dedicated to our northern Illinois customers. If you have questions about your service or bill or if you have an emergency regarding your sewer service, please contact our Customer Service Center at 1-800-422-2782.

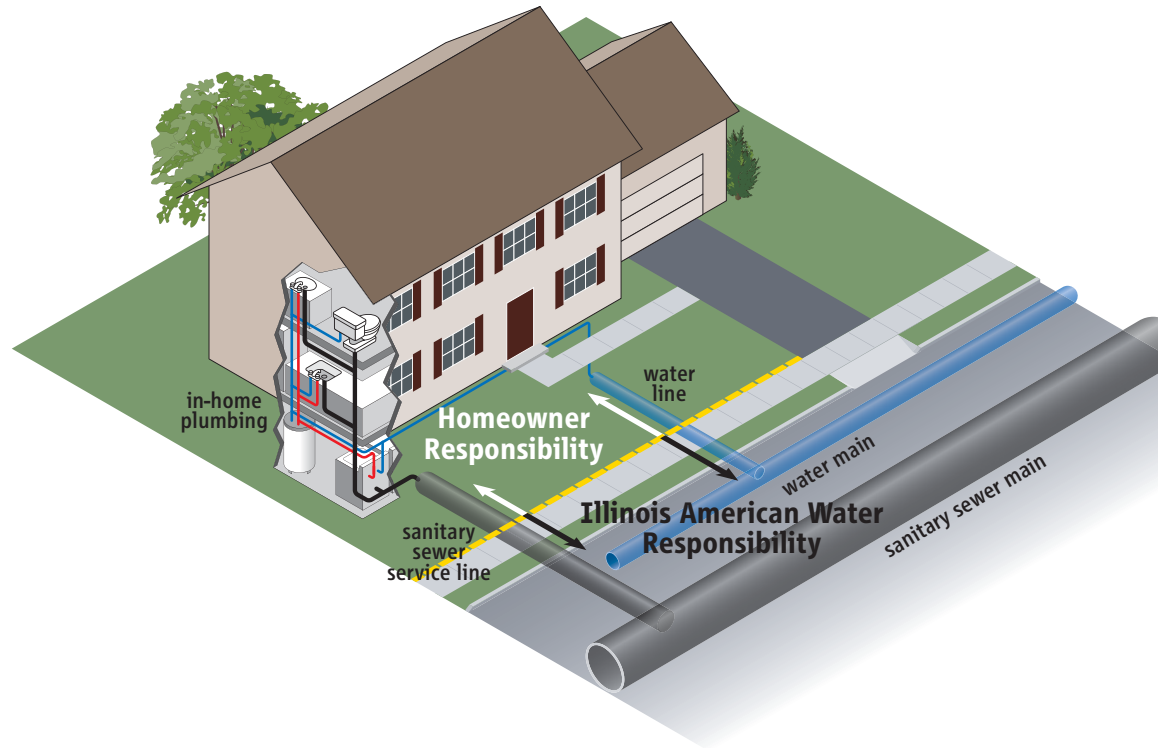
If your issue can't be resolved to your satisfaction through our Customer Service Center, please contact our local Customer Advocate's office in Woodridge, Illinois, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., by calling 1-630-739-8810. If you prefer, you can contact us via e-mail at [ILAW@customercomments.com](mailto:ILAW@customercomments.com), and we will work quickly to assist you.

While we hope you never need to refer to this guide due to a sewer backup, we recommend that you keep it handy for future reference...just in case. Thank you for the privilege of serving you.



Kevin Hillen  
Network Operations Manager

## Homeowner responsibilities for water and sewer lines



# Common questions customers ask about sanitary sewer service and sewer backups

## What is a sanitary sewer main?

A sanitary sewer main is a pipe located in the street, back easement, or side easement that is designed solely to transport wastewater from homes and businesses to the wastewater treatment plant. Sanitary sewers in your neighborhood are owned, operated, and maintained by Illinois American Water.

## What is a sanitary sewer service line?

A sanitary sewer service line is the pipe that transports wastewater from plumbing fixtures within the home to the sanitary sewer main. The homeowner owns and maintains the sanitary sewer service line from the house to the property line or easement.

## What is a cleanout?

A cleanout is an access point in the sanitary sewer service line which allows a plumber to clear out obstructions in the line. It can be located in the front, back, or side yard, the laundry room, or the utility room. Not all homes have a cleanout.

If there is no cleanout, a plumber may be able to access the sewer line from a vent stack on the roof or from a toilet (the toilet would need to be removed).



**Cleanout** sanitary  
sewer line access

## What are illegal sanitary sewer connections?

Illegal connections are downspouts, sump pumps, footing tiles, drains from window wells, and drains from driveways that introduce storm water into the sanitary sewer system. *These connections are strictly prohibited.*

## What am I responsible for?

You own and are responsible for maintaining that portion of the sanitary sewer service line located on your property and within easements for which you have ownership rights. Your maintenance responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the intrusion of tree roots into the sewer line. Also, you are responsible for the maintenance of all plumbing within the home.

## What is Illinois American Water responsible for?

Illinois American Water owns and is responsible for maintaining the sewer main in the street, and any portion of the sewer service line located off your property or within easements for which you do not have ownership rights.

- If the sewer main is in the front or side of the house or in the street, Illinois American Water is responsible for maintaining any portion of the sanitary sewer service line after the property line, which is normally one foot in from the sidewalk on the house side.
- If the sewer main is in the rear of the house, in an easement, or an alley, Illinois American Water is responsible for any portion of the sewer service line that extends beyond your property line. If the sewer main connection falls within your property line, Illinois American Water is responsible for the sewer main connection only.

## What may not be discharged into the sanitary system?

The following illegal substances may not be introduced into the sanitary sewer service line:

- Gasoline or other flammable liquids, solids, or gases;
- Garbage not properly shredded by a disposal unit;
- Ashes, cinders, sand, mud, straw, shavings, metal, glass, tar, wood, or other solid or viscous substances capable of causing obstruction to the sewer service line or the main sewer line;
- Common household grease from cooking.

Storm water, surface water, roof run-off, surface drainage, and/or footing drainage may not be introduced or caused to be introduced into the Company's sanitary sewer main.

Connections allowing these types of discharge to enter the Company's sanitary sewer main are illegal due to local and regional regulations.

### How do I maintain my sanitary sewer service line?

- Be careful what enters the sewer service line. Grease, oils, sand, mud, silt, or solid objects are capable of causing sewer blockages.
- Make sure no storm water connections or cross-connections are made to the sewer service lines (such as sump pumps, gutter drains, footing drains, or storm run-offs).
- Avoid planting fast-rooting trees such as willows, elms, or maples in the vicinity of sewer service lines. These types of trees are attracted to very moist areas. Their roots may grow into and ultimately obstruct the sewer lines.
- Make sure the sewer service line is properly vented. Usually a vent stack exits the roof and must be kept clear of bird nests and debris.
- Use sink strainers and keep disposals in working order to prevent large pieces of waste from entering the sewer line.

### What can I do about sewer gas odor?

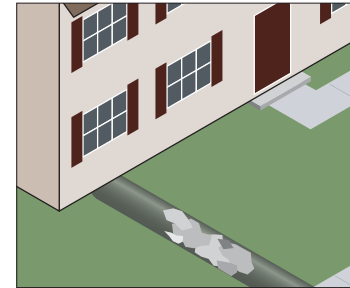
Floor drains typically are the source of sewer gas odor. You should periodically fill floor drain traps with water to avoid sewer gas odor problems—one or two gallons will normally suffice.

### What is a sewer backup?

A sewer backup occurs when there is a blockage of some kind in either the sewer main or the sewer service line. Blockages prevent wastewater from flowing freely from your home to the sewer main.

### What causes sewer backups?

Some of the more common causes of backups are described and shown below:



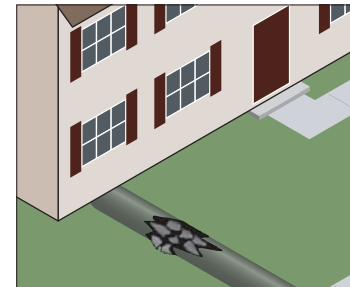
#### **Common household waste**

*A partial or complete blockage of the sewer service line by debris or foreign objects.*



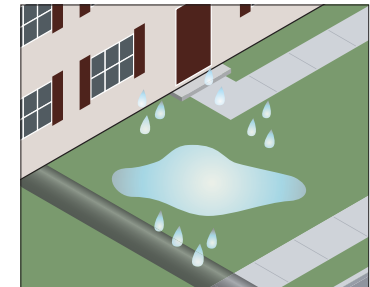
#### **Root invasion**

*A partial or complete blockage of the sewer service line by tree roots.*



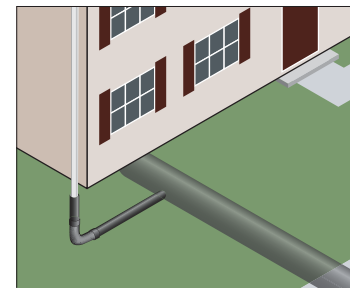
#### **Pipe collapse**

*A sewer service line collapse caused by a settling of the sanitary sewer line or settling of ground over the sewer service line.*



#### **Inflow & infiltration**

*Severe rain events result in large amounts of surface water inflow and infiltration into the sanitary sewer system.*



#### **Excess water from illegal connections**

*Entrance of large amounts of extraneous water to the sanitary sewer system from the illegal connection of sources other than sanitary fixtures and floor drains. Such extraneous water generally will be present during periods of heavy precipitation.*

# I have a backup in my sanitary sewer line... what should I do?

## What should I do if I experience a backup?

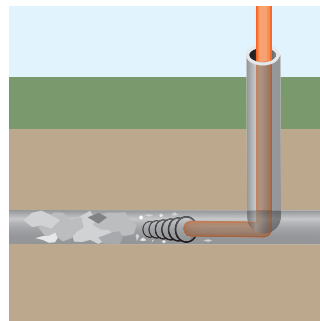
When sewage drainage problems occur, you should first determine whether or not the problem is internal by checking all drains.

When only one drain is affected, it is possible the drain trap or the line leading from the drain is clogged and needs to be cleaned by a commercial cleaner and/or rodding cable.

However, if all drains are affected, immediately call Illinois American Water Company FIRST. The customer service number is **1-800-422-2782** and representatives are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A Company representative will come to your home and determine if the sewer main is affected or your sewer service line is affected. There is no charge for this service call.

If the problem is detected in the sewer main, we will clear the problem at no expense to you.

If no problem is detected in the Company's sewer main, our representative will advise you to call a plumber to rod the sewer service line connecting the residence to the sewer main. Our representative will provide you with a sewer rodding form and a list of plumbers that we have interviewed concerning their qualifications and our sewer policy. You may use one of these plumbers or contact one of your own choosing.



*Sewer line rodding to clear blockage*

If a plumber from the list is utilized, the Company does not need to be present during the rodding. If the customer selects a plumber that is not on the list, the Company will want to witness the rodding.

Always feel free to call us with any questions you may have concerning any aspect of your sanitary sewer service.

## What about payment of the plumber's rodding invoice?

Illinois American Water will reimburse up to \$400.00 for rodding invoices when the blockage occurs within the Company's area of responsibility and the obstruction is successfully cleared, and:

- A plumber on the Company list is utilized (no witness is required); or
- A plumber not on the Company list is utilized, and a Company representative witnesses the rodding; or
- A plumber not on the Company list is utilized, and a Company representative is not available to witness the rodding through no fault of yours. In this case, the plumber should note the footage on his invoice, showing that the blockage fell in the Company area of responsibility; or
- A plumber was retained by the Company to clear the blockage; or
- A sewer rodding form is completed by the plumber and submitted with the plumber's invoice.

The customer is fully responsible for payment of any invoice associated with blockages on the customer side of the service.

The plumber will invoice the Company for payment by mailing an invoice with any paperwork left with you by our Company representative, and the Company will pay the invoice by mail. Payment will normally be processed within 30 days. However, if the plumber is unwilling to be paid by mail by the Company, you may pay the plumber directly and submit a copy of the receipt and paperwork to Illinois American Water for reimbursement. Please send this documentation to: Illinois American Water, ATTN: Sewer Claim Reimbursement, 1000 Internationale Parkway, Woodridge, IL 60517. Reimbursement will normally be processed within 30 days.

The Company will not be responsible for payment of a rodding invoice for:

- A rodding or an excavation for a blockage that occurs within your area of responsibility.
- A rodding that is performed by a plumber not on the Company list that was not witnessed by a Company representative (unless the Company has advised you to proceed without our Company representative).
- An installation of a cleanout.
- An excavation that occurs in the Company's area of responsibility that is done without obtaining written Company approval.
- An obstruction cleared which was the result of an illegal substance.
- A rodding which was not successfully cleared by the plumber and then cleared by another plumber.
- Televising of the sewer lateral.

### How do I select a plumber?

Stated below are guidelines to help you select a plumber:

- Plumber should agree to rod to our sewer main.
- Plumber should be bonded.
- Plumber should be insured.
- Plumber should be willing to provide a warranty.
- Plumber should be willing to provide references.
- Plumber should provide a price range before the work is completed.

\* You should advise the plumber approximately how many feet of rod will be needed (our Company representative will inform you at the time he checks the sewer main line). Make sure the plumber has adequate equipment to do the job.